

# Night Stalkers Name NCO and Soldier of the Year

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FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. (Sine Pari, May 13, 2008) - The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment announced the winners of the Non-Commissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year competition during a ceremony at Fort Campbell, Kentucky on May 8. Sgt. Renster B. Joel, a human resources sergeant, was named the NCO of the Year, and Spc. Todd A. Gilger, a helicopter repairer from 2nd Battalion, 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR, was chosen as the Soldier of the Year.

Eleven Night Stalkers representing each of the Regiment's four battalions, Special Operations Aviation Training Company, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company participated in the competition. "Earning the opportunity to compete at the Regiment level competition is a testament to the quality of these top Night Stalkers standing here today," Command Sgt. Maj. Jake Elliott, 160<sup>th</sup> SOAR command sergeant major, said of all his competitors. "There can only be one winner in each category, but all of these Soldiers did a great job."



Elliott explained that the competition is not a measure of any one Warrior skill but rather a measure of the total Soldier. "This competition challenges a Soldier mentally and physically," he said. "It causes them to combine all of their knowledge and skills to adapt and overcome known and unknown scenarios." The Soldiers competed in seven Warrior task challenges including physical fitness, land navigation, weapons live fire, hands-on Warrior skill testing, a mystery event consisting of an armored car rollover simulation, and a combination written essay and oral board. Each event had a points value assigned, and the NCO and Soldier with the most points at the end of the competition earned the respective titles.

"The most physically demanding portion of the competition was the land navigation event having to wear all of the equipment including body armor, Kevlar and protective mask," said Gilger. But he was ready for that and every challenge thanks to support from fellow Night Stalker Spc. John Bell. "My sponsor has done a great deal in making sure I was squared away and looking sharp," Gilger said.

Joel said the oral board was the most mentally challenging event for him. The questions came in rapid fire from the board members, consisting of eight 160th command sergeants major and first sergeants. "The oral board was brutal," he recalled. "I think they are looking for your confidence and what you know. If you know what you're talking about, you can answer the questions in seconds." In the end, every Soldier, not just the winners, got something out of the competition.

"This experience has taught you all a great deal," Elliott said. "Take these Soldiering lessons back and share them with your fellow Night Stalkers." Joel and Gilger will represent the 160th SOAR in the 2008 U.S. Army Special Operations Command NCO and Soldier of the Year Competition at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.